

Major Projects

Much effort was expended in 1999 on a Government-funded Evaluations and Investigations Programme study. The resultant report, entitled: "Developing a Framework to support the Adoption of Computer-facilitated Learning and Support Materials in Australian Universities" was released in mid-2000. This report has considerably strengthened ASCILITE's reputation in policy-making circles.

Late in 1999, the Society, on behalf of a consortium of eleven universities received an Australian Government Committee for University Teaching and Staff Development (CUTSD) grant for a project entitled "Staff Development in Evaluation of Technology-based Teaching Development Projects: An Action Inquiry Approach". Details about the project are available at <http://cleo.murdoch.edu.au/projects/cutsd99/>.

During 2000, approximately 40 members have been taking part in 20 evaluation studies (supported by mentors) as part of this project, and 18 of the initial 20 studies are likely to lead to significant scholarly outcomes.

A workshop about the CUTSD project will be held immediately prior to the 2000 conference, to consolidate and affirm the learning achieved by participants.

AJET

Volume 16 of the Australian Journal of Educational Technology has been published in 3 issues in 2000. Thirty nine papers were received for consideration in 2000. Of these, 18 were rejected, 12 were accepted and 9 are still in review.

Three issues are planned for 2001 starting with best papers from the ASCILITE conference. A possible addition to the journal structure is peer reviews of educational software and resources.

Miscellaneous

Secretariat procedures to do with subscription renewals and reminders have been automated and streamlined.

A long term objective of the executive, a Strategic Plan, made some progress in 2000, putting together work done in previous years. More work will be needed on this by the new Executive in 2001.

The Executive started to investigate the feasibility of electronic voting in 2000.

Issues of copyright were actively reviewed and clarified during 1999-2000, with assistance from the Copyright Agency Limited.

The Executive continued its search for ongoing sponsorship of the Society, but a more concerted and businesslike approach needs to be followed.

The categories for the ASCILITE Awards were overhauled.

Challenges

Despite many successes, some significant challenges face the Society. The voluntary status of the Executive, and the pressures of today's tertiary environment, have meant that some services to members which had been planned have not been realised. A possible solution is to restructure the Executive to expand its size, so that the workload is spread more widely.

An alternative solution is to increase the funding base to the Society, so that an executive officer can be employed. The funding base can be increased either by sponsorship (which requires specialist, non-academic skills) or by increasing membership.

Thoughts of increasing membership raise another dilemma for the Society. Over the last few years, the scholarship of teaching and learning with technology has become increasingly mature. Having a paper accepted at the ASCILITE Conference has become increasingly difficult. The dilemma for the Society is whether to focus on academic rigour for a small number of members at each institution, or to focus on support for the increasingly large number of people interested in educational technology in their daily working life.

The solution arrived at will strike a balance between these competing tensions. The Society needs to maintain its academic rigour, but it also needs to cater to the needs of a wider membership, whose fees will support the further growth of the Society. In my opinion, the Society needs to substantially increase its income to meet the demands placed on it. It must grow in order to survive. This imperative will impose a significant challenge on the new Executive.

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Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education

President's Message

The report signals the end, for me, of four years as President, and eight years on the Executive of ASCILITE. During the last four years, membership has increased from 231 to 419, and the Society has taken an increasingly international focus, with a change in name from 'Australian' to 'Australasian', and members in 13 countries. Approximately one eighth of our members are now from outside Australia.

I feel confident that ASCILITE is in a strong position to move forward under a new leadership. It is time for new blood, and new directions. Indeed, this is inevitable, with a large turnover in Executive members this year. It is gratifying that there are numbers of new people willing to stand for election. I am sure they will find being a member of the ASCILITE Executive a fulfilling experience. I know I did. I will have enduring memories of the freely-flowing ideas and ego-less nature of our meetings. I wish to express my gratitude to all the executive members I have worked with over the last eight years - it has been a most enjoyable experience!

Rob Phillips

Executive Members

President

Rob Phillips
Murdoch University

Vice-President

Helen Carter
University of Wollongong

Treasurer

Russ Pennell
University of Western Sydney

Committee

Bill Chia
University of Western Sydney

Jenny Winn
Private Consultant

Beth Cavallari
University of Queensland

Carmel McNaught
RMIT University

Rod Sims
Southern Cross University

Cathy Gunn
University of Auckland

The Executive was admirably assisted in its work by Stacey Dennis at the Secretariat, from CEDIR at the University of Wollongong and Carole Evans as Executive Assistant from TEDI at the University of Queensland. The Society acknowledges the contribution of both institutions, particularly TEDI, who sponsored Carole's availability.

Seconded

Allan Christie
NetSpot Pty. Ltd

Historical Overview

During the last four years, the Society has achieved many things, in a climate of reduced funding and increasing workload for tertiary employees.

- Through an alliance with the Australian Society for Educational Technology in 1997, ASCILITE re-invigorated the Australian Journal of Educational Technology (AJET). Under the editorial guidance of Ron Oliver and Roger Atkinson, AJET has significantly increased the volume and quality of its papers.
- Since 1996, each ASCILITE conference has attracted over 200 attendees, and returned over \$20,000 to the Society, thereby keeping membership fees low, and our financial position strong.
- ASCILITE has increased its profile in policy-making circles, primarily in Australia, through contributions to Government-funded activities:
- The Society contributed its views to the Australian West Review of higher education in 1997.
- ASCILITE produced a report under the Government-funded Evaluations and Investigations Programme in 1999 entitled: "Developing a Framework to support the Adoption of Computer-facilitated Learning and Support Materials in Australian Universities".
- During 2000, ASCILITE has been working on an Australian Government staff development programme in "Evaluation of Technology-based Teaching Development Projects", funded by the Committee for University Teaching and Staff Development (CUTSD).
- ASCILITE has been at the cutting edge of electronic communications with its members, with email communications starting in 1994, and the first conference papers appearing on the web in 1995.
- The ASCILITE Virtual Conferencing System is a powerful, database-driven communication tool, which is just starting to be used to its fullest potential.
- We have also established an affiliation with the UK-based Association for Learning Technology.

Membership

Of the Society's 419 members, 368 come from Australia, but the remaining eighth of the members originate from 12 other countries, as shown in **Table 1**. The Australian membership is heavily concentrated in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, as shown in **Table 2**. The incoming Executive may wish to direct special recruiting effort into the under-represented states and territories, as well as improving membership from New Zealand.

Table 1. Membership by country

Country	Total
Australia	368
Canada	2
Fiji	1
Hong Kong	2
New Zealand	23
Scotland	1
Singapore	3
South Africa	4
Sweden	3
Thailand	1
The Netherlands	1
United Kingdom	7
United States of America	3
Total	419

Table 2. Australian membership broken down by state and territory

State	Total
ACT	9
NSW	126
NT	7
QLD	62
SA	25
TAS	1
VIC	110
WA	28
Total	368

Finances

The Society continues to enjoy a healthy financial position. Through the work of the Treasurer, Russ Pennell, and Stacey Dennis in the Secretariat, we have a well-oiled and responsive accounting system. Notably, long-standing accounting discrepancies were cleared up with the assistance of the auditors.

Monthly financial updates are available for inspection by members at <http://cadfl.nepean.uws.edu.au/ascilite/reports/ongoing.html>.

1999-2000 Financial Statements

ASCILITE began the year with total equity of \$64,273.51 and finished with \$56,739.28 to record a loss of \$7,534.23, made up of income \$25,300.89 and expenses \$32,835.12. Membership fees totalled a healthy \$19,990, reducing our former dependence on Conference income.

The results for the financial year 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000 were distorted by the late arrival of the Conference surplus. The ASCILITE99 Conference held at QUT in December 1999 achieved a healthy surplus of \$17,004, as well as repaying the \$5000 loan we'd provided, but these amounts did not reach us till the end of August 2000. Consequently they are not included in our results for the year.

At the end of October 2000 equity had returned to the healthier figure of \$69,305.27.

Australian GST Issues

The introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in Australia in July 2000 imposed extra burdens on the Society, and the establishment of GST procedures took most of the year. A decision was made to register for GST, as it offers the Society a saving of approximately \$4000pa. Accordingly, membership fees were increased by \$7 pa, (claimable as a tax deduction by members where applicable). Non-Australian members are not affected, as GST is not chargeable in this case.

ASCILITE Regional Activities

A new initiative for 2000 was the establishment of the ASCILITE regional activities. This was a reincarnation of the ASCILITE Local Activities scheme which faded out due to lack of interest in the mid-1990's. The regional activities were re-established due to a strong response from respondents to a survey as part of the draft marketing plan conducted in 1999.

The regional activities commenced with the sponsorship of the annual UniServe Science National Workshop (2000) in Sydney. The workshop, entitled "Evaluating the New Teaching Technologies", was held on Friday 28 April, and was preceded by a half-day discussion forum on the first year experience.

Sponsorship was also given for the ASCILITE/AusWeb Road Shows which featured highlights from the AusWeb conference. Keynote speakers, formal papers and tutorials/workshops from the Cairns conference were presented again in Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne.

A little further afield, ASCILITE President, Rob Phillips travelled to New Zealand in late May 2000, partly to promote ASCILITE in that country and partly to take part in the University of Auckland's Vice Chancellor's Symposium on Flexible Learning, as a regional ASCILITE activity. While he was there, Rob also gave presentations and had informal discussions at Auckland University of Technology, Unitec Institute of Technology and Waikato Polytechnic.

Conferences

We are looking forward to the 2001 conference at the University of Melbourne, organised by Mike Keppell, Peter Harris, Gregor Kennedy and colleagues.

However, the 2002 conference will break new ground for ASCILITE, because it will mark our first conference outside Australia. It will be held at UniTeC in Auckland. It will be a pleasure to have the conference hosted there by Alison Young and her team.

Over the last two or three years, the Executive has been developing a Conference Handbook. This handbook forms a living memory of how to organise a conference, and will be updated and refined on an ongoing basis. It might be possible to market this to other institutions as a guide for their conferences.

The online handbook at <http://www.ascilite.org.au/confhbk/> covers:

- technical support for conferences
- policy and procedure covering the correct handling of monies taken as part of conference registrations
- paper refereeing procedures and guidelines.

In addition, Carmel McNaught presented a seminar in Melbourne, and wrote a 'How To' paper on preparing papers for conferences, to encourage non-academic members to submit papers. This came about because the existing reviewing processes seemingly favoured academic papers, possibly to the detriment of papers submitted by general staff, technical officers, etc. A fair percentage of ASCILITE members are not academics, and all should be given the chance to present their work at the conference, be it a full paper, poster or workshop. Review panels will be encouraged to include development people in the review process.

Online Services

ASCILITE has provided online communication for members since 1994, with all conference proceedings since 1995 online. This has now evolved into a sophisticated Virtual Conferencing System (VCS), developed by sponsor, NetSpot Communications, directed by Allan Christie. During the last year, the usability of the VCS has been refined. The VCS has been an essential factor in the development of a community of learners as part of the ASCILITE CUTSD evaluation project, described elsewhere.

Substantial work has also been done on the ASCILITE Links Database, which will enable distributed management of discipline-specific collections of educational resources and links.

Monthly usage statistics for the ASCILITE web site are publicly available at <http://www.ascilite.org.au/stats/>. This provides fine-grained data about usage of the site. Our conference proceedings remain popular with researchers and search engines.

The ASCILITE website was substantially revamped during the year, thanks to the work of Bill Chia, Russ Pennell and Allan Christie and the NetSpot team. Both now and old members might be interested in the living history of the Society at <http://www.ascilite.org.au/history.html>.